

# How the Bible Foretold, in Two Places, the Foundation Date of Israel – 1948

by Jeremy James



At a time when the modern state of Israel is coming under severe pressure from other countries, both Arab and Western, to cede part of its sovereign territory to its enemies, we need to remind ourselves that the LORD has other plans.

Through His holy Word we know that this rebellious act will not be tolerated. He said that he would gather His people from among the nations and establish them once again – permanently – in the Promised Land. Not only did He uphold the first part of His covenant, but He did so in the year foretold, 1948 AD.

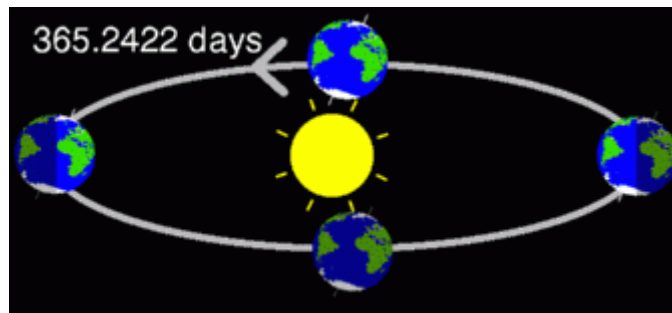
This year may be calculated from two prophetic passages in the Bible, both of which were underlined in dramatic fashion by the LORD. The first is in the Book of Daniel, where the pre-incarnate Christ wrote four words on the wall during Belshazzar's feast. The second is during one of the public enactments of prophecy which Ezekiel was required to perform. Instead of simply reporting and recording the prophecy, Ezekiel had to go one step further and act it out in a public place.

Before proceeding to show how the date may be calculated in two different ways, I would like to give credit to two important sources. The first is *Temple at the Center of Time* by David Flynn, which sheds additional light on the meaning of the words that the pre-incarnate Christ wrote on the wall in Babylon. The second is *The Israel Omen* by David Brennan, which gives one of the two prophetic calculations (though not exactly as we have done in this paper).

### **Some points about Biblical prophecy**

The Bible frequently refers to a prophetic year as a "day." There are many passages which confirm this. For example, when Jacob had to work a further seven years for Laban in order to win Rachel as his wife, the Bible referred to this period as a "week," that is seven days.

Also, the Jews in Biblical times used the lunisolar calendar, which had a year of 360 days, rather than the lunar calendar, which had a year of 354.37 days, or the solar calendar which had a year of 365.24 days. It is important to take this into account when interpreting prophetic passages (**See Note A**).



### **The First Prophetic Calculation**

The scene at Belshazzar's feast in the year 538 BC is one of the most dramatic in the Bible. As co-regent of the Babylonian empire, Belshazzar was hosting an extravagant party for his admirers, using vessels stolen from the Temple in Jerusalem. Unknown to Belshazzar and his generals, the Persians had stealthily diverted the mighty Euphrates which flowed through Babylon and were sneaking in via the drained river-bed that ran beneath the great walls of the city.

During their last hours the Babylonian dignitaries – who were committing an appalling act of sacrilege by using Temple vessels – were confronted by a disembodied hand which wrote the following words on the wall of the banqueting hall: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" (Daniel 5:25).

Everyone in attendance was greatly alarmed. The old prophet, Daniel, who by then was probably in his late eighties, was called to interpret these disturbing words. What message did they have for Belshazzar? According to Daniel, they were saying that God had numbered the days of the kingdom of Babylon, that its rulers had been weighed and found wanting, and that it was now being divided between two conquering nations, the Medes and the Persians.

The prophecy was fulfilled and Belshazzar and his generals were executed the same day.

David Flynn noted that, if interpreted as units of measurement, the four words "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" could also represent an identifiable numerical value. Independent confirmation of this may be found in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* by Walvoord and Zuck.

Some terms of monetary measurement in the Bible – *gerah*, *shekel*, and *manneh* – were actually Chaldean in origin and denoted the same numeric values among the Jews as they did among the Babylonians. It should be remembered also that both Daniel and Ezekiel, who were domiciled in Babylon, were fully familiar with its customs and could speak Chaldean.

The *gerah* was the smallest unit of monetary value in Babylon, rather like a cent in modern usage. Ezekiel tells us (verse 45:12) that there were 20 *gerahs* in a *shekel*. Thus the words "Mene, Mene, Tekel [*shekel*], Upharsin" were collectively describing a numerical value, where a standard Babylonian *Mene* (or *manneh*) was equivalent to 50 *shekels* or 1000 *gerahs* (**See Note B**) and a *Parsin* was equivalent to 500 *gerahs* (Upharsin literally means 'and a divided *manneh*'). This gives [*mene* + *mene* + *shekel* + *upharsin*] or [1000 + 1000 + 20 + 500] = 2,520 *gerahs*.

In the same way that the four words on the wall, written with the finger of God, were conveying a specific message to Belshazzar, they were also conveying another, very different message, to the Jews. To appreciate the significance of this message we need to place it in its historical context. Babylon had fallen in that very hour and the entire kingdom was now under the rule of Cyrus, the Persian general. The following year, 537 BC, Cyrus would issue a decree for the release of all foreigners held captive in Babylon. This instantly lifted the residency restrictions on the Jewish people and they were now at liberty to return to the Promised Land.



**Clay cylinder at the British Museum inscribed in Babylonian cuneiform with an account by Cyrus, king of Persia (559-530 BC) of his conquest of Babylon in 538 BC.**

It is notable that "the finger of God" is referred to only a few times in the Bible, and in each case it imparts a sign of great significance for the Jewish people. When the LORD sent his miraculous signs and plagues upon the obstinate Egyptians, the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is **the finger of God**." (Exodus 8:19). Later, the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ, wrote the commandments with his finger upon the tablets of stone: "And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with **the finger of God**." (Exodus 31:18). During his earthly ministry, the incarnate Christ identified himself with the "finger of God" when he cast out demons, thereby proclaiming to his Jewish audience that he was indeed the promised Messiah: "But if I with **the finger of God** cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you." (Luke 11:20)

Jeremiah had prophesied that the Jews would be held captive for 70 years in Babylon – see Jeremiah 25:11-12. Even after serving this period of captivity, they would continue to live in subjection under a succession of foreign powers – Persian, Greek and Roman – before being scattered to the four winds in 70 AD and thereafter. They would not become a sovereign or self-governing nation again until 1948 AD.

The difference between these two dates – 537 BC and 1948 AD – is 2,484 solar years. (We have *subtracted* a year since a calendar year is lost in the transition from BC to AD. For example, the gap between 1 January, 2 BC, and 1 January, 2 AD, is three years, not four.) However, since these are solar years, they each comprise 365.24 days. If we convert them into lunisolar years, we get a very surprising result:

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 2,484 \text{ solar years} = 907,256 \text{ days} & [2,484 \times 365.24 = 907,256] \\
 907,256 \text{ days} = \underline{2,520 \text{ lunisolar years}} & [907,256 / 360 = 2520]
 \end{array}$$

So, just as they were about to complete their 70 years of captivity in Babylon, the LORD told the Jewish people – through "the finger of God" – that they still had a further 2,520 lunisolar years to serve before the penalty for their transgressions had been paid in full and they could once again return to, and enjoy sovereign control over, the Promised Land.

## The Second Prophetic Calculation

We will now examine the second prophecy regarding the foundation of modern Israel and the year 1948 (This follows David Brennan's analysis with minor changes).

The prophet Ezekiel tells us that the LORD directed him to lie on his left side in a public place for 390 days and then to turn on his right side and lie there for another 40 days:

Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity.

For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year. [Ezekiel 4:4-6]



Scene illustrating Ezekiel 4:1

Please consider how extraordinary this must have seemed to the Jewish people at the time, where a highly respected prophet voluntarily prostrated himself before all and sundry in a most undignified way for over a year. Clearly the LORD wanted all the Jews in exile in Babylon to get the message.

But what *was* the message?

This is spelt out by Ezekiel. The northern and southern kingdoms of Israel (known respectively as the house of Israel and the house of Judah) were being punished for their iniquities – their repeated failure to observe the simple precepts that the LORD had given them. As a rebellious and stiff-necked people who had refused to honour their covenant with God, they were to suffer retribution. The LORD had already warned many times of the punishment that would befall them if they spurned His holy law, but they would not listen.

As the above passage states, each day represented a year of punishment ("...each day for a year"). This punishment was to comprise 390 years for the rebellion by the northern kingdom and 40 years for the southern kingdom. What is more, the sentence was to be served consecutively, with the two periods added together, just as the prophet himself was required to lie in a public place – among strangers – for 430 consecutive days.

The significance of these two numbers, 40 and 390, has been debated by Bible scholars for quite some time, but a satisfactory explanation has never been given. As Eugene Merrill observed:

"These numbers have defied solution to the present day. Merely to add 390 and 40 to 592, which appears to be the date of the oracle, or even to 586, the date of Jerusalem's destruction, seems to lead to little result...Perhaps the answer lies...in adding 390 to 40 and seeing in the total, 430, an analogy to the 430 years Israel spent in Egyptian sojourn. This would still not account for the 390 and 40 year figures, however." (*A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, R Zuck (editor), 1991, p.372).

The Book of Leviticus sets out clearly the laws which the Jewish people were expected to observe. It also specifies the penalties that would be incurred for each breach of the law. In particular, as David Brennan notes, it provides for the multiplication of those penalties where the attitude of disobedience was wilful and persistent:

And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. (Leviticus 26:18)

And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. (Leviticus 26:21)

And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. (Leviticus 26:27-28)

These admonitions, repeated three times, would strongly suggest that the LORD later did as He warned he would do and multiplied their punishment seven-fold. This occurred, apparently, when they rejected Him yet again at the end of the Babylonian captivity by refusing to return in any appreciable numbers to the Promised Land. While a small group had returned initially to rebuild the Temple, the numbers overall were very low. For example, in 459 AD, 78 years after the decree issued by Cyrus, when there would have been well over 200,000 Jews living in Babylon, only 6,000 decided to return from exile with the prophet Ezra (See Ezra 8). In fact Ezra referred specifically to the absence of any members of the tribe of Levi from the cohort he had initially gathered together (Ezra 8:15).

Since the Jews had already served 70 years of their punishment in Babylon, the multiplication specified in Leviticus could apply only to the remainder, namely 360 years (430 less 70). When subjected to a seven-fold increase this becomes 2,520 lunisolar years (360 x 7).

And once again we have the remarkable prophetic number – 2,520.

As our earlier calculation showed, this translates into a foundation date for the modern state of Israel – 1948.

### **Acknowledgements**

Again I would like to acknowledge the work of David Flynn (*Temple at the Center of Time*) and David Brennan (*The Israel Omen*) in relating these prophetic passages to contemporary events. I hope this paper serves to highlight the connection between these prophecies and the need for all born-again Christians to stand firmly for Israel in the coming turmoil.

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### Note A

## **Biblical year of 360 days**

The 360-day year is used throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. For example, in Genesis we read:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. (Genesis 7:11)

And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. (Genesis 8:3-4)

These verses show that a period of 5 months is equal to exactly 150 days, giving 30 days per month or 360 days per year.

In Revelation we read:

“They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” (Rev. 11:2-3).

This confirms that, even in the End Time, the LORD is describing events in accordance with a 30-day month, 360-day year [ $1260 / 42 = 30$ ].

In his landmark book, *The Coming Prince*, Robert Anderson successfully calculated the chronological meaning of the "seventy weeks" of Daniel by using a 'prophetic year' of 360 days.



### **Note B**

#### ***Gerahs in a Mene***

Ezekiel referred to the relationship between the units of measurement in ancient Babylon:

"And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels, shall be your manneh." (Ezekiel 45:12) [KJV]

This would suggest that there were actually 60 *shekels* in a *manneh* ( $20 + 25 + 15 = 60$ ), but this is problematic. The RSV translates the same verse as follows:

"The shekel shall be twenty gerahs; five shekels shall be five shekels, and ten shekels shall be ten shekels, and your mina shall be fifty shekels." (Ezekiel 45:12) [RSV]

In the entry devoted to 'Shekel', the **Jewish Encyclopedia (1906)** stated that the Babylonian *manneh* (or *mene*) undoubtedly consisted of 50 shekels, and not 60. The RSV translation is consistent with this view.